

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 GUATEM 01687 261435Z

50

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 EUR-25 SCS-03 SCA-01 DRC-01 /125 W

----- 090418

R 252345Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2581

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 1687

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CPRS, PINT, GT

SUBJECT: IMPENDING EXPULSION OF MARYKNOLL PRIESTS

REF: GUATEMALA 1586

1. AMBASSADOR CALLED ON FOREIGN MINISTER ARENALES AT 3 PM FRIDAY AFTERNOON MARCH 22 AT AMBASSADOR'S REQUEST TO DISCUSS IMPENDING EXPULSION OF THREE MARYKNOLL PRIESTS WHO ARE U.S. CITIZENS.

2. IT APPEARED THAT FONMIN ANTICIPATED THE PURPOSE OF THE VISIT SINCE HIS USUALLY SMILING COUNTENANCE WAS STERN AND SERIOUS.

3. AMBASSADOR SAID HE HAD COME TO DICUSS THE SITUATION OF THE THREE PRIESTS ON AN INFORMAL BASIS. THE PRIESTS IN QUESTION HAVE NEVER THROUGHOUT THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS PROBLEM SOUGHT THE INTERCESSION OF THE EMBASSY NOR HAS THEIR DIRECTOR, FATHER BREEN. ON EACH OCCASION OF CONTACT WITH THE MARYNKOLL PRIESTS IT HAS BEEN THE EMBASSY THAT HAS TAKEN THE INITIATIVE TO OBTAIN INFORMATION OR CLARIFICATION OF THE SITUATION AND TO OFFER ASSISTANCE SHOULD THAT BE APPROPRIATE.

4. THE AMBASSADOR SAID HE WAS NOT QUESTIONING THE SOVEREIGN RIGHT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF GUATEMALA TO DETERMINE WHO MIGHT LIVE AND WORK IN GUATEMALA AND UNDER WHAT CONDITIONS THEY MIGHT RESIDE IN THE COUNTRY. HE WAS ALSO AWARE THAT GUATEMALAN LAW PROVIDES
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 GUATEM 01687 261435Z

THAT FOREIGNERS MAY BE EXPELLED FROM THE COUNTRY WITH OR WITHOUT

STATING A REASON AND DOES NOT PROVIDE A RIGHT TO A HEARING FOR SUCH PERSONS. HE WANTED TO EXPRESS HIS CONCERN TO THE FOREIGN MINISTER, HOWEVER, THAT AN EXPULSION OF AMERICAN PRIESTS FROM THE COUNTRY WITHOUT INFORMING THEM OF THE CHARGES AGAINST THEM NOR GIVING THEM A HEARING OR AN OPPORTUNITY TO REPLY COULD NEEDLESSLY COMPLICATE THE GOOD RELATIONS BETWEEN THE U.S. AND GUATEMALA AND COULD BE EXPECTED TO PROVIDE A SHARP UNFAVORABLE REACTION IN THE UNITED STATES. IT WOULD APPEAR UNFORTUNATE NEEDLESSLY TO DAMAGE THE IMPROVED IMAGE OF GUATEMALA IN THE U.S. WHEN THE GUATEMALAN GOVERNMENT COULD AFFORD TO GIVE A HEARING TO THE CHIEF OF THE MARYKNOLL PRIESTS, FATHER BREEN, IF ON NO OTHER BASIS THAN AS AN ACT OF GRACE AND FAVOR AND AS AN INDICATION OF ITS CONSIDERATION FOR THE INDIVIDUALS AFFECTED AND ITS INTEREST IN PRESERVING HARMONIOUS RELATIONS WITH THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES. SUCH A HEARING COULD CONCEIVABLY RESULT IN A CLARIFICATION OF THE MATTER AND A RESOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM.

5. THE FOREIGN MINISTER SAID FOR HIS PART HE WOULD REPLY BOTH INFORMALLY AND OFFICIALLY. HE PROCEEDED TO GIVE THE AMBASSADOR A LENGTHY ACCOUNT OF THE RELATIONS BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE IN LATIN AMERICA, THE EVOLUTION OF THE MODERN CHURCH AND SPECIFIC DIFFICULTIES IN RECENT YEARS IN GUATEMALA BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND FOREIGN PRIESTS, PARTICULARLY THE MEMBERS OF THE MARYKNOLL ORDER. HE SAID THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD ASSURED HIM HE WAS IN POSSESSION OF EVIDENCE IMPLICATING THE THREE PRIESTS IN QUESTION IN POLITICAL ACTIVITY IN GUATEMALA, ALTHOUGH THE FOREIGN MINISTER DISCLAIMED ANY KNOWLEDGE HIMSELF OF THE SPECIFIC CHARGES OR THE EVIDENCE ON WHICH THEY WERE BASED. THE PRESIDENT HAD REVIEWED THE PENDING CASES AND HAD DECIDED TO LIFT THE EXPULSION ORDER AGAINST ONE OF THE THREE AMERICAN PRIESTS AS WELL AS AGAINST THE GERMAN PRIEST. THIS DID NOT MEAN THAT THERE WAS NOT EVIDENCE AGAINST THESE MEN BUT IT HAD BEEN DECIDED THEIR TRANSGRESSIONS WERE LESS SERIOUS. THE OTHERS, HOWEVER, MUST LEAVE THE COUNTRY.

6. THE AMBASSADOR REMARKED HE WAS PLEASED TO KNOW THAT ONE OF THE AMERICAN PRIESTS MIGHT REMAIN BUT HE WOULD LIKE TO REITERATE THE IMPORTANCE HE ATTACHED TO HAVING FATHER BREEN RECEIVED BY EITHER THE MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT OR THE PRESIDENT, WITH BOTH OF WHOM FATHER BREEN HAD SO FAR UNSUCCESSFULLY SOUGHT AN AUDIENCE. THE FOREIGN MINISTER DURING THE CONVERSATION THAT ENSUED MADE CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 GUATEM 01687 261435Z

EFFORTS TO AVOID A REQUEST BEING MADE FOR AN AUDIENCE WITH THE PRESIDENT. AS THE MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT IS CURRENTLY OUT OF THE COUNTRY AND IS NOT EXPECTED TO RETURN BEFORE THE END OF THE MONTH, THE EFFECTIVE DATE GIVEN THE PRIESTS TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY, HE SUGGESTED FATHER BREEN SEE THE VICE MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT OR PERHAPS THE VICE PRESIDENT, BUT NOT THE PRESIDENT. HE SAID THE PRESIDENT HAD ALREADY SPOKEN WITH THE NUNCIO ABOUT THIS MATTER AND THAT THE BISHOPS AND MANY INDIVIDUAL PRIESTS

WERE ATTEMPTING TO SEE HIM. THE PRESIDENT HAD SAID HE COULD NOT BE "NIBBLE TO DEATH BY A SWARM OF ANTS" REFERRING TO ALL THESE REQUESTS. THE AMBASSADOR POINTED OUT THAT THE CASE OF FATHER BREEN APPEARED SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT IN THAT FATHER BREEN HAD DIRECT ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE MARYKNOLL PRIESTS IN QUESTION AND WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THEM.

7. THE FOREIGN MINISTER EXPRESSED LITTLE CONCERN
E E E E E E E

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: EXPULSION, FOREIGN RELATIONS, CLERGYMEN, CHURCH STATE RELATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 25 MAR 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974GUATEM01687
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740065-0163
From: GUATEMALA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740318/aaaaaqxl.tel
Line Count: 118
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: GUATEMALA 1586
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags: ANOMALY
Review Date: 16 SEP 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <16 SEP 2002 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <03 JAN 2003 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: IMPENDING EXPULSION OF MARYKNOLL PRIESTS
TAGS: CPRS, PINT, GT, US, (BREEN, JOHN)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005